Digital Certificate Factsheet

What is a Digital Certificate?

A digital certificate is a method of "signing" and encrypting with your identity electronic messages or documents. The certificate represents a binding contract between two parties who may have never met. It has the same legal weight as a transaction signed in ink. For more information, please go to http://www.digsigtrust.com/support/pki_basics.html.

Access to Public Health Issues Management System (PHIMS) (as well as other systems administered by the Washington State Department of Health [DOH] within the Transact Washington secure environment) requires a high-level assurance digital certificate placed on a Universal Serial Bus (USB) storage token.

Your Local Health Jurisdiction's (LHJ's) Data Steward will work with DOH to establish and maintain your LHJ's PHIMS User Accounts. The Data Steward tells the WEDSS Customer Support Center who in their LHJ needs a digital certificate.

Who in Local Health Jurisdictions needs a Digital Certificate?

- Staff using PHIMS to investigate and report notifiable disease conditions
- Staff using PHRED (the Public Health Reporting of Electronic Data) System, another internet-based application maintained by DOH) to retrieve laboratory reports from the Department of Health
- Staff querying the PHIMS database to extract data for epidemiologic analyses
- Staff reviewing case information to manage events and personnel (such as a supervisor or health officer)
- (Optional) Information Technology staff supporting installation of digital certificates

Purchasing a Digital Certificate

A digital certificate is active for one year, after which it must be renewed, a process initiated by the user. While funding permits, DOH is issuing voucher numbers to LHJ Data Stewards, which cover the cost of new and renewed digital certificates.

Obtaining and Installing a Digital Certificate

The process for obtaining access to PHIMS is not difficult, but it does involve several steps:

- ✓ Having your data steward approve the application, and request a voucher number from DOH
- ✓ Applying online for a Washington State digital certificate, which includes a form to be signed a notary public
- ✓ Installing digital certificate utility software on your computer and "retrieving" your certificate
- ✓ Creating a Transact Washington account
- ✓ Requesting access to PHIMS

1. Apply for a digital certificate by going to Transact Washington at http://transact.wa.gov. Transact Washington is an electronic gateway for individuals and organizations who require the ability to perform secure online transactions with the State of Washington and access confidential or sensitive data, such as that found in PHIMS.

2. Select **Get Digital Certificate** on the **Transact Washington** homepage. This will link you to the website for Digital Signature Trust (DST) http://www.digsigtrust.com/state/wa/, the organization that actually issues the digital certificates. Click **Apply Now** on the DST site and follow the steps listed on the screen.

   For assistance with the application process, contact DST's 24-hour help desk at (888)248-4447, or e-mail HelpDesk@trustdst.com

3. Following the DST application process, make the following selections:
   - A **High** assurance level of your digital certificate
   - **USB token and extension cable** for type of security device, unless prior approval has been given by the DOH WEDSS program
   - Enter your DOH–issued, 15-character **voucher number**
   - Create a **password** of between eight and fifteen numbers and/or letters. The password cannot contain spaces or special characters and is case sensitive

4. Download, complete and mail the notary form to the Utah address listed within its instructions

DST will review and approve your digital certificate. If all goes well, a welcome kit will be sent to your home address in about a week.

Bring your welcome kit to work once you receive it. It contains all the information and devices needed for installation at your workstation. The installation process is rather complicated, so be sure to contact your organization's technical support staff to assist you.

Creating a Transact Washington Account and Accessing PHIMS

Once your digital certificate has been installed, you're ready to register your certificate in Transact Washington. To do so:

1. Contact WEDSS Customer Support Center by email at wedss.support@doh.wa.gov or toll free 877-889-3377 for the PHIMS service code. You will need this to add PHIMS to your service account
2. Plug your token into the USB port or USB extension cable on your computer
3. Access Transact Washington http://transact.wa.gov
4. Select the certificate to use when connecting, and then enter your certificate password
5. Select **Register My Certificate** and follow the instructions on the screen
6. Select **High** as the assurance level of your digital certificate
7. On the **My Transact Account** screen, select **My Transact Account**
8. Select **Add a Service**
9. On the **Add a Service** screen, enter the PHIMS service code given to you by DOH. You will be directed to the PHIMS user registration page
10. Fill in the following fields: **Name**, **email address**, **phone number**, **Local Health Jurisdiction**
11. Click **Submit**

Transact Washington will send an e-mail notification to the DOH WEDSS Customer Support Center. You will be notified by e-mail or phone when your account has been approved and created.

Logging on and off PHIMS

Please refer to *Logging On and Off PHIMS* for information about opening and closing PHIMS.

DOH Support

For questions or problems regarding PHIMS, Transact Washington or digital certificates, contact the WEDSS Customer Support Center at wedss.support@doh.wa.gov or toll free 877-889-3377.

The WEDSS Customer Support Center can:

- Provide the Data Steward with a voucher number to pay for the cost of the digital certificate
- Provide support to the LHJ throughout the application and installation process
- Establish a PHIMS Account for the user, creating access to the disease categories and application privileges specified by the Data Steward (for example, a Sanitarian might be granted disease investigation privileges for Enteric diseases, but not for Zoonotic diseases)

- The WEDSS Customer Support Center cannot provide User Accounts that are not authorized by the LHJ Data Steward

Security and Handling Confidential Data

A digital certificate is an electronic credential used to verify the identity of individuals involved in online transactions or accessing sensitive information within Washington State's digital government. The technology allows for authentication, encryption, validation and non-repudiation. These functions allow DOH to meet Washington State law and policy requirements for security and confidentiality regarding sensitive e-health programs, such as PHIMS.

After the generation of your certificate and every time you wish to access PHIMS, your token and browser will present your digital ID to Transact Washington. Your digital certificate comes with a strict set of issuance policies as required by Washington State law. Among other things, you may not legally share your certificate with any other person. The stringent proof-of-identity process required during the application process is designed to verify your identity. You are required to revoke your certificate if the password has been comprised or at the time of termination of employment.

PHIMS identifies and logs all transactions, recording the user ID, time, and date any entry or change is made to a case.

Your digital certificate is portable and can be used from multiple workstations. As long as the browser requirements are met, you have the ability to plug your token in the USB port and install the token management software.